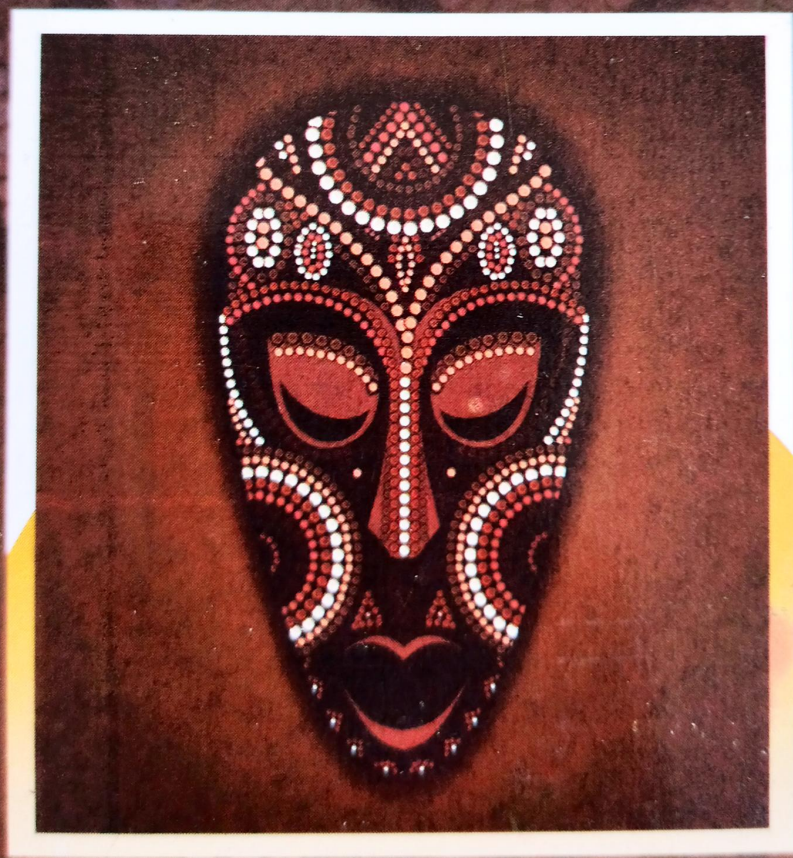


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# **METAPHYSICS BEYOND THEORIES**

Philosophical Intervention of Cultural Experience



*Edited By*

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# A METAPHYSICAL ANALYSIS OF SYMBO-PARANORMALISM AS A SPIRITO-REPRESENTATIVE NOTION IN THE ODOMAGANA CULT OF IGBO TRADITION

NWEZE, Tochukwu Obumneme Paulmary

## Abstract

Masquerading is part and parcel of African identity as well as its diversity within the Igbo cultural milieu. In this work, we see how masking traditions vary within Igbo land from *Omabe*, *mma*, *mmawu*, *ogbodo*, *ekpe* and *odo*. We focus on the tradition of *Odomagana* or simply *odo*, with all its richly symbolic rituals especially within the domains of its role in the life of the people of the Northern Igbo land. Particular emphases are made to the role of masquerade cult as a means of initiating the young into full adulthood with special reference to *Ukana* which is present within *Igbodo* tradition practiced by a group of towns.

**Keywords:** Metaphysics, Analysis, Symbols, Paranormal, Spirit, Representation, *Odomagana*, Cult, Igbo Tradition, *Ukana*, Initiation, Masquerade, Africa

## Introduction

Looking around in search of the driving force behind the plenitude of human activities, it is obvious that each individual's successful identity discovery extends a relational thrust towards those of corresponding attributes. It is on the verge of these colloquials that a way of life is adopted to act as a unifier, and this is what we refer to as culture. We will look at the cultural sphere in the light of the African cultural milieu manifest in the Igbo people of South-Eastern Nigeria, using the cluster of towns in the North Central part as a case study. The relational history of these people will give a firm footing to delve into the unique cultural practices inherent in them as distinct from all other communities in Igboland. A preview of the political and religious beliefs of these towns will end our first section. The firm foundation established by an understanding of the culture of the people of North Central Igboland will now steer our impetus to investigate further into one the most popular

and venerated cultural practices in the area called "Odomagana". This will be characterized by an understanding of the concept and notion of masquerading in Igboland, the general perception and approach to masquerading in Igbo land will set into the motion the penultimate grounds for our discourse. Our conclusion will rest on a holistic exposition of the uniqueness of Odomagana as a masquerading tradition including the *modus operandi* and *modus vivendi* of the Odo cult and its associated Igodo festival. The influences of these practices on the people and its philosophical interpretations will draw the curtain on our elucidation.

### Amplification Of Concepts

It is often said that the knowledge of the experiences of the past presents lessons that will prevent mistakes for the future; and to that end, we will bring to bear the connecting historical perspectives of towns of Northern Igboland towns. We will link this information with their traditional practices, hence a clearer understanding of its influence on their socio-cultural existence as well as their political and religious beliefs.<sup>622</sup> The Igbo tradition which is associated with over 15 million people is inherent among one of the three major ethnic groups of Nigeria, situated at the South-Eastern region of the country between latitude 5 and 7 degrees north and longitude 6 and 8 degrees east. The archaeological excavations around the region, show that the Igbo people have been dwelling within their current habitation since around 3000 BC, with an array of artifacts found around Igbo Ukwu and Nsukka.<sup>623</sup>

The Igbo metaphysical belief system is shrouded with inexplicable mythology intertwined in a sense of the sacred which involves the existence of *Ala mmuo* (spiritual world), *Elu uwa* (the physical world) and the exchange of the forces behind *Ogwu* (magical powers) in the way of life of the people. The hierarchy of being plays a significant role in this operation since for the Igbo people, *Chukwu* (Supreme Being) who has the other major and minor gods like *Ala* (Earth goddess) and *Igwe* (sky

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<sup>622</sup> José Angel Lombo and Francesco Russo, *Philosophical Anthropology: An Introduction*, ed. Jeffrey Cole, trans. Piers Amodia (Illinois: Midwest Theological Forum, 2014), loc. 25 of 383, Adobe Digital Edition.

<sup>623</sup> Charles Ekpo and Jide Chime, "Africa and the Origin of Democracy; A Reappraisal of the Igbo Stateless Society," in *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 1, no. 1(2016): 132.

god) as intermediaries with the *chi nta* present in every human person.<sup>624</sup> The Igbo community dynamism as the emphasis on hospitality as a distinctive attribute of the welcoming culture associated with Igbo humanism as well the embodiment of proverbs in the communication and moral reminiscence within the cultural milieu of Igbo tradition thought.<sup>625</sup> The rest of Igbo land which extends to minority presence in Delta and Rivers states all bore their descendance from *Eri* while *Nnri* kingdom which headed by *Eze Nri* is still the most valid hierarchical institution and the embody true custodian of Igbo tradition.<sup>626</sup>

### The View of Symbo-Paranormalism

The etymological extraction of the term symbol is from the Greek word *σύμβολον* or *sumbolon*, meaning a token or watchword. This is a comparative depiction of the genuineness of something outwardly. Symbols can pass as iconic representation intended to showcase military, religious and other organizational concepts. The manifestation of symbols in many African Traditional Religions is pluralistic though sometimes there is no graphical or pictorial representation of the actual faith.<sup>627</sup> Symbols can be associated with both animate and inanimate entities, however in the case of animals or humans, mythology often plays a role in ensuring that the similarities shared by the entire animal kingdom including the weakness of the interpretative strategy of the human evaluator who despite his superiority may be limited in properly depicting it. The use of these symbols to communicate ideas or quality in art, science, literature

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<sup>624</sup> Celestine Mbaegbu, "A Philosophical Investigation of the Nature of God in Igbo Ontology" in *Open Journal of Philosophy* 5 (2015): 144.

<sup>625</sup> Emmanuel Ejimkeonye, "Reconstructing the Notion of 'Fetish' Practices in the Igbo Metaphysics in Relation to the Greek Mythological Notion of Gods" in *Cultural Wisdoms of Africa: From the Ethno-Cultural and Anthropo-Existential perspectives*, ed. Anthony Emeka Okonkwo (Ibadan: Don Bosco Institute Publications, 2021), 71.

<sup>626</sup> Kingsley Nnodu, "*Pecunia*: The Metaphysical Notion of Money Among the Igbos and its Approach in relation to the Notion of Money Ritualism" in *Cultural Wisdoms of Africa: From the Ethno-Cultural and Anthropo-Existential perspectives*, ed. Anthony Emeka Okonkwo (Ibadan: Don Bosco Institute Publications, 2021), 115.

<sup>627</sup> Hans A. Baer, "Symbols," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society*, ed. William H. Swatos (California: AltaMira Press, 1998), 504.

etc. is called symbolism.<sup>628</sup> Paranormal, from the etymological perspective points to that which by the prefix, *para* in accordance with the term, 'normal' simply implies something that goes beyond normality. This concept holds sway in relations to both conventional and institutionalized religious studies where the influence of an external physical cause is absent despite the convincing evidences that are seemingly glaring and perceptible.<sup>629</sup>

Paranormal belief falls into the category of scientifically non-satisfactory propositions which as a result of being from the agency of non-scientists, lacks empirical attestation but however enjoys remarkable societal acceptance despite being shrouded in uncertainty. The peculiarities around the paranormal are that in the eyes of the people, its phenomenological verification and reality goes beyond a mere relativistic endorsement. The behavioral, intellectual and emotional components of symbo-paranormal belief are such that it exceeds a simple statement of preference which firmly rejects counterarguments within the obvious realms of uncertainty and credulity while manifesting related indicators to its effectiveness.<sup>630</sup>

### Idea of Spirito-Representation

The term 'spirito-' is the contraction of the word spiritual which is etymologically derived from the Latin word *Spirāre* which is 'to breathe,' and this can be linked with Greek word for spirit, *pneuma*.<sup>631</sup> Spiritual is a concept that revolves its concerns around the matters of spirit, differing from the physical and material. Its presence within Religion and Mysticism gives it a multidisciplinary outlook that is related to the paranormal as well as the Divine and operates within the paradigms of belief, cultures, cults and faith.<sup>632</sup> Representation is from Latin words *re* + *praesentāre* which

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<sup>628</sup> J.C. Cooper, *Symbolic and Mythological Animals* (London: Aquarian Press, 1992), 11.

<sup>629</sup> Cristoffer Tidelius, "Paranormal," in *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 29 (2020). 217.

<sup>630</sup> Harvey Irwin, *Psychology of Paranormal Belief: A Researcher's Handbook* (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2009), 16-17.

<sup>631</sup> Eric Partridge, *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (London: Routledge, 1966), 3178.

<sup>632</sup> K. S. Raghavan, "Knowledge Representation in the Spiritual and Cultural Domains," in *The Open Information Science Journal*, 3(2011):6.

means 'to present again' or simply 'to represent.'<sup>633</sup> Representation is an interactive relationship between thought and language that explains patterns expressed in the external reality or utilized by the mental processes, therefore it is an avenue to approach the explicit in the other to gain certainty.<sup>634</sup>

### **Belief of Cultism**

The origin of terms like *Cultus* which means 'active care' or 'cultivation,' are from where the concept of cultism arose.<sup>635</sup> The term cult refers to any group of people bound by a common interest or belief in a particular goal; however, when the suffix '-ism' is added to the noun, it forms cultism which is a ritual oriented system of religious worship or philosophy, which is shrewd in obsessive devotions towards the particular person, object or idea.<sup>636</sup> In *addendum*, the application of cultism is diverse, however for the benefit of this research some attention will be paid to the ancestral cult. Ancestors are the deceased members of a group which in actual sense functions as a cult since only a common belief well practiced can elevate one to the status of an ancestor; despite these ancestral cults are mainly referred to the class of deceased members whose veneration are typified with ceremonies or festivals. The idea of a temporary reemergence of these spirits as depicted through *Egungun* masquerade in Yoruba land and *Odo* in Igboland.<sup>637</sup>

### **Notion of Odomagana**

The concept of *Odomagana* was etymologically derived from the terms *Odo*, which traditionally refers to the colour 'yellow,' not just as a colour but as an extract from choice trees and seeds that is mashed and diluted with water as a material for traditional art and ritual practices; *maa* is the variant of *muo* which means 'Spirit' or 'essence' as used within the

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<sup>633</sup> Partridge, 994.

<sup>634</sup> Moema S. Borges, Marilia B. C. Santos, and Tiago G. Pinheiro, "Social Representation About Religion and Spirituality" in *Rev Bras Enferm* 64, no. 4 (2015): 528.

<sup>635</sup> Partridge, *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English*, 698.

<sup>636</sup> Simeon Ige, "The Cult of Ancestors in African Traditional Religion," in *An Encyclopedia of the Arts* 10, no. 1(2006): 26.

<sup>637</sup> Ige, 28.

northern Igboland; and *agana* means a plea 'do not go.'<sup>638</sup> This means when juxtaposed, they point to the ancient practice of using the yellow paste from nature to adorn the masquerade which usually has palm fronds attached to it; and the belief that the *Odomagana* which is often contracted to *Odo* is possessed by an ancestral spirit and the need for this reality to remain for generations to come through observing ritual celebrations.<sup>639</sup> Given that the backgrounds and concepts of the traditions of the Igbo people as well the ideas of representation and symbolism which will assist our investigation into the spirituality and paranormal in the central notion of *Odomagana* as a hallmark of traditional worship and cultism. This step-by-step analysis, gives us an exposition that will simplify our understanding of the study under review, remarkable among them is the certainty that when the operate concepts of an inquiry are clear and well understood, the objective of the research work is better achieved.

### ***Odomagana* Cultism and its Operations**

Our attempt to critically analyze masquerading tradition of *Odomagana* is far from the polidemonism or devil's cult of Thomas Herbert which was the first reference of the West African Traditional Religion as the worship of the devil in various natural objects and idols.<sup>640</sup> Since the culture of a people is what gives them an identity, this will be sought beyond the defamatory assertions that call it 'fetish' which is from the Latin term *facticus*, meaning 'magical power.'<sup>641</sup> In Igbo traditional milieu, the cultural practice of masquerading and this will lead our investigation through the perception of masquerading and the various traditions in Igboland. The rituals and procedures adapted by the *Odo* cult, its underlying paranormal and spirituality, as well as its community dynamism, symbolism, initiation and the way these traditions are still alive within the contemporary Igboland.<sup>642</sup>

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<sup>638</sup> Joseph C. Ezechi, *The Dead Are Never Gone: Odo Masquerade and Contemporary Realities* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension, 2011), 78.

<sup>639</sup> C.C. Oguamanama, Chigozie. J. Odum and K. Ezeh, "Odo Masquerade in Northern Igboland: A Cultural Resource in Demise," in *Journal of tourism and Heritage Studies* 7, no. 1 (2018): 81.

<sup>640</sup> Christopher Ezekwugo, *Chi: The True God in Igbo Religion* (Kerala: Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Theology, 1987), 34.

<sup>641</sup> Ezekwugo, 30.

<sup>642</sup> Oguamanama et al., "Odo Masquerade in Northern Igboland: A Cultural Resource in Demise," 79.



### **Masquerading in Igboland**

In the crafts of ancient Igboland, the generational acceptance of the doctrine that one of the means through which the spirits and the living could commune and maintain close relationship is through the masquerade; hence the commemoration of festival across Igboland in honour of masquerades, revolves around it. The preservation of this traditional institution which does not concession its cultural practices hold sway in the life of the people.<sup>643</sup> Mask wearing among others is a characteristic transition from childhood to adulthood; for Igbos, this identifies the possession of strength, power and prosperity when a successfully initiation acclaims.<sup>644</sup> There are other masquerading traditions including the *Omabe*, which the predominant within the Nsukka towns of North Igboland; *mma*, prominent among the remaining towns of both Nsukka and Udi; *mmanwu*, which is the most popular masquerading tradition in Igbo land cutting across all the five major Igbo speaking states; *Ogbodo*, majorly practiced within Ebonyi state; *Ekpe*, chiefly the local phenomenon in Abia State; and *Owu*, the principal masquerading type found in Imo state.<sup>645</sup>

### **Spiritual Notion of The Odomagana Cult And The Paranormal**

*Odo* masquerading tradition is observed among *Igbo Odo*, a cluster of Igbo-Etiti Local Government towns including Ukehe, Aku, Diogbe, Umunko, Ohebe, Umuna, Ochima, Ikolo, Umuoka, Onyohor and Udueme;<sup>646</sup> and *Ojebe Ogene*, in Udi Local Government comprising Ukana, Abor, Ohum, Okpatu, Umulumgbe and Ebe, all in Enugu State.<sup>647</sup> The reason that historical reminiscence is pertinent, the appearance of Umuoka and Ukehe within *Igbo Odo* though they are both sons of *Ojebe Ogene*, is as a result of the influence of a tyrant warrant chief, Onyeama. Chief

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<sup>643</sup> N. Ezenagu and T. Olatunji, "Harnessing Awka Traditional Festival for Tourism Promotion," in *Global Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences* 2, no. 5 (2014): 43.

<sup>644</sup> John Middleton, ed., *Africa: An Encyclopedia for Students* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002), 1:65.

<sup>645</sup> Herbert Cole and Chike Aniakor, *Igbo Arts: Community and Cosmos* (California: University of California Regents, 1984), VII.

<sup>646</sup> E. I. Itanyi, "The Odo Masquerade Institution an Tourism Development; A Case Study of Igbo-Etiti Local Government Area of Enugu State," in *International Journal of Research in Arts and Social Sciences* 3 (2011):150.

<sup>647</sup> Cole and Aniakor, *Igbo Arts: Community and Cosmos*, VII.

Onyeama's method of administering for the colonial masters called the 'Rule of Agbaja' was unfavourable for both Ukehe and Umuoka, hence they fled towards the north and formed alliance with *Igbo Odo* and this was solidified with their inclusion in the Local Government grouping; they contributed in spreading the *Odo* tradition in Nsukka.<sup>648</sup>

The male exclusivity attached to the *Odo* masquerade, makes its secrets to be associated with the patriarchal traditional leadership style with spiritual and shared roles; this does not eliminate the secondary entertainment function, though it is a messenger of the gods.<sup>649</sup> The *Igbo* concept that associates ancestral worship purports the validity of Plato's immortality of the soul, because they hold that after the death of a man there is a transition to the land of the ancestors, from where he will reincarnate through a new born baby if he was courageous and made great achievements during his life time.<sup>650</sup>

*Odo* as a manifestation of ritual symbolism which comprises a relationship between the spirit and the dead, of which the spirit always has the upper hand; and the mask as a representative of the spirit deity, where the spirit is the ancestor while the deity is the gods.<sup>651</sup> The paranormal inclination of *Odo* cult lies in its theistic link to the cult of the dead, a clear indication why burial ceremonies are usually intertwined with the appearance and incorporation of the rites that ensure the deceased joins his ancestors peacefully.<sup>652</sup> The integral role of music in the rituals of the *Odo* cult cannot but be emphasized since the instruments which accompany the music is significant for invocation of ancestral spirits while expelling evil spirits, hence the expertise and the process of appointing official drummer was seen as sacred and is as important as the drum itself; and in some cases they pass it on to their children.<sup>653</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> Dillibe Onyeama, *Chief Onyeama: The Story of an African god* (Enugu: Delta, 1982), 101.

<sup>649</sup> Oguamanama et al., "Odo Masquerade in Northern Igboland: A Cultural Resource in Demise," 79.

<sup>650</sup> Emeka Nwabueze, "Igbo Masquerade Drama and the Origins of Theatre: A Comparative Synthesis," in *Kunapipi* 9, no. 1 (1987): 93.

<sup>651</sup> Itanyi, 154.

<sup>652</sup> Ezekwugo, *Chi: The True God in Igbo*, 51.

<sup>653</sup> Willi Appel, ed., *Harvard Dictionary of Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1969), 17.

The *Odo* cult in practice within the Igbo orthodoxy has been tagged as one with some of the most complicated operational secrecy especially in the acquisition and display of its masquerades. The materials and the mode of producing the attire is shrouded in secrecy since it is believed that it is sent from the world of the spirits; the mythology surrounding the death sentence on women who came out at night to see the *Odo* or the rituals they observed to anticipate special ceremonies like the *Igodo* festival, was to preserve the secrets of the cult.<sup>654</sup> Certain sources however claim that there is a nocturnal preparation of the *Odo* attire by initiated members who quietly slash *Omu* from their palm trees to recover their freshly harvested fronds which is transported to the designated forest for knitting, paying particular attention to the strength of the man who will carry it.<sup>655</sup> The development of an exclusive linguistic communication ensures further preservation of cultic surreptitiousness, this language for them is learnt after initiation and the conclusion of a probation period which encompasses the study of it. Usually accompanied by unmasked members, there is an interpretation of its words by them when there is need for communication. Some common aspects of this language are *Ahon* – woman, *Egedege* – face. *Otum gerergere* – wine, *Ajigbu* – meat, *Hakpara* – money etc.<sup>656</sup>

### **Odo Initiation and the Communal Symbolism**

The essential of prayer in the image formation of any religion as well as the role of sacrifices is also found with the *Odo* cult hence participation in these exercises requires initiation into the practice of sacred functions. Initiation into the *Odo* cult is both as a rite of passage from childhood to adulthood as well as integration into the interlocutory function of disposing one's body for the possession of the ancestral spirits in order to communicate its intention to mortal men.<sup>657</sup> This ritual assures the community that one has attained the maturity to take up a set of tasks in the town; when this is performed by sacred persons who mediate on behalf of the members of the cult, carrying on various practices that may

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<sup>654</sup> Oguamanama et al., "Odo Masquerade in Northern Igboland: A Cultural Resource in Demise," 87.

<sup>655</sup> Oguamanama et al., 82.

<sup>656</sup> Oguamanama et al., 88.

<sup>657</sup> Ezekwugo, *Chi: The True God in Igbo*, 49.

involve divination and the invocation of natural forces.<sup>658</sup> Women partaking in the Odo cult is generally unacceptable, firstly because of the patrilineal supremacy inherent in the Igbo traditional worldview, also because their intolerance to hazard and the habit of gossiping; though some explanations delve into the consideration of biological requirement that causes them to menstruate which is seen as a sign of impurity similar to the Jewish religious observance. There are however festive roles which go *pari passu* with the relevance of women, and this is the traditional preparation of the delicacy called *Okpa*, which is made from bambara nut and serves as the choice meal for the Odo masquerade in most towns.<sup>659</sup>

### **Contemporary Milieu of Odomagana and the Odo Cult in Ukana**

The Odo masquerade institution is as old as the culture of the people, such that it has been integrated and form part and parcel of the way of life of these people; in line with the culture transmission, there have been challenges creeping into the ancient patterns of worship ascribed to the Odo deity and the *modus operandi* of its cult.<sup>660</sup> According to Barrister Marcel Okpo's historical analysis, Ukana was the third son of Ojebe Ogene's marriage to Ogwugwu-Ebenebe, and had his own eight sons: Ngodo, Amaezi, Amakpu, Ikenge, Okofia, Amaebota, Enugu-Ezeachi and Adani, which were the only villages before 1958.<sup>661</sup> Ukana is a custodian of the Odomagana tradition within his eight sons by integrating its tenets into the rites for entry into adulthood through an initiation process of two stages: the first is the *Iba Ama Odo*, which is an initial passage into the *onu odu* often with severe whipping of the candidate by a young *odomagana*; the final is the *Ichu Odo*, which is characterized by learning the *modus operandi*, *modus Vivendi* and traditional routes of the cult.<sup>662</sup>

The activity of the *odomagana* cult has a prominence that the *nnata odo* and the *una odo* which is collectively called *Iso odo* is solemnized with the *Eka ani* festival. The *Eka ani* festival is a day ceremony that takes place in two phases; the first takes place during harvest on low key to mark the

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<sup>658</sup> Ezekwugo, 50.

<sup>659</sup> Oguamanama et al., "Odo Masquerade in Northern Igboland: A

Cultural Resource in Demise," 89.

<sup>660</sup> Oguamanama et al., 92.

<sup>661</sup> Marcel Nwaorah Okpo, *Ukana: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*

(Enugu: Snapp, 2010), 2.

<sup>662</sup> Okpo, 32.

beginning of the manifestation of the various *odo* masquerades in order of seniority in the town; while the second phase which marked by pomp and pageantry is to mark the exodus of the masquerades back to the land of the spirits, and it usually takes place around April at the beginning of planting season.<sup>663</sup> The introduction of foreign religions like Christianity, the onset of civilization and globalization, as well the incessant abuse of power among those who are to promote these traditions, has greatly affected the mode of practice of the *Odomgana* cult within these towns. Ukana however, among many who were affected by this unfortunate series of events have revived this tradition. They particularly invigorated the *Igodo* or *Igodo Okpa* festival, which is celebrated around December, three months after the first phase of *Eka ani* festival and it is symbolically the 'Town's Day' in Ukana. As the name goes, the consumption of the local bambara nut delicacy called *Okpa* is never left out; and it comprises other activities like a variety display of all the *odo* masquerades in the town and others within *Ojebe Ogene*, including the consanguinity of Umuoka and Ukehe are also invited, thus a highly colourful is always the case.<sup>664</sup>

Moreover, apart from the revitalization and rejuvenation of the ancient traditional practices which *Ukana* has ventured, there is still a need to explore the tourism potentials that festivals, dance, diet, monumental shrines that surround the activities of the *Odomagana* cult, and to see how it can be utilized.<sup>665</sup> Since the *Odomagana* cult and masquerade is properly designated within the state, the Enugu Tourism Board and National Tourism Development Corporation should be involved in taking advantage of the growing global trends in tourism to endorse the planning and coordination of these festivals which could be better executed with substantial funding.<sup>666</sup> Following that our discussion helped us proceed from the concept of masquerading in Igbo land to the specific investigation into the *odomagana* masquerading cult which like other secret societies in Igboland has an implicit initiation ritual. This process gives a candidate the opportunity to explore the spirituality of the cult which is linked with the

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<sup>663</sup> Okpo, 4, 28.

<sup>664</sup> Okpo, 30.

<sup>665</sup> L. C. Ekechukwu, "Encouraging National Development through the Promotion of Tourism: The Place of Archaeology," in *West African Journal of Archaeology* 20 (1990): 57.

<sup>666</sup> Oguamanama et al., "Odo Masquerade in Northern Igboland: A Cultural Resource in Demise," 94.

spirits of dead ancestors. The advent of Christianity and civilization have marred the rich cultural substance inherent in the *odomagana*, however some towns like Ukana have revamped this heritage by reinstating the annual *Igodo* festival. The financial demand of organizing such tourist destination appealing event should draw the attention of the federal and state Governments to the conscience upgrade through various tourism parastatals or commissions.

## Conclusion

The interplay of culture and conviction is evident in the mode of preservation adopted by the people of Enugu state in the observance and immortalizing of the *Odomagana* cult which unlike other masquerading traditions in Igboland is concentrated within a narrow geographical location with the north of Igboland. There was a deliberate attempt to make exposition of the ancient practices of the *Odo* cult including their influences on the way of life of the people in their time. On the account of the fact the foundations of antiquity make the contemporary building blocks easier to lay, we went on to observe critically the influence of these practices on the present situation of the people. This made us to delve into the analysis of the *Odomagana* cult in one of the cradles of this religion, Ukana, which has emerged in prominence from its historical pattern adopted in the perpetuation of the cult through the incorporation into the coming-of-age transitory initiation.

As much as this practice subsists, it means that every male child of an Ukana indigene was destined to belong to the *Odomagana* cult through a chastising process of sporadic flogging which culminates in an invitation into the *onu odo*, where one is schooled in the art of masquerading following the operation laid down by their ancestors whose spirits, they were custodians of. Also, with the reintroduction of this traditionally rooted religion after some years of stagnancy and near obliteration, the question in the heart of the indigenes is that of a possible way of integrating the tenets of the *Odo* cult into the Catholic Christian religion which caters for the majority population of the town. In the case of divergent ideas on that front, another question which seeks to extract the less evil while considering the preservation of a cultural heritage over and above a white man's religion. Consequently, the war of the conscience continues to trail the mindset of the indigenes of both the *Igbo Odo* and *Ojebe Ogene* cluster of towns, since it was to them that this tradition was

handed over to perpetuate, hence it is a situation of being caught between the devil and the deep blue sea. In some towns, the use of charms and talisman to theatricalize their masquerade exhibitions have been eliminated while in some others, the holistic elements of secrecy and confidentiality among the members are gradually fizzling to the female folks.

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